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TAGS: [PREL](#) [EG](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: AMRE MOUSSA ON IRAQ

Classified By: Ambassador Francis J. Ricciardone for reasons  
1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Ambassador to Iraq Ryan Crocker met with Arab League Secretary General Amre Moussa October 26th in Cairo. Moussa said that Arabs share USG interests for a secure, stable Iraq, and that Iraqi reconciliation is critical. He agreed that Arab leaders should do more to support the Iraqi government and Iraqi Shia, especially as a deterrent to Iranian influence. He plans to assign a high level envoy to the Arab League's permanent mission in Baghdad. Moussa acknowledged the security situation is improving in Baghdad but expressed concern about the situations in the south and north, and worried that there is not a strategy on the political front. Ambassador Crocker gave an overview of security and political progress, and said that recent progress on security had lowered the level of fear and allowed for positive developments on Sunni-Shia reconciliation in Anbar and around Baghdad. He made clear that a strong U.S. presence in Iraq would continue into the next Administration. End summary

¶2. (C) During his hour-long meeting October 26 with Arab League Secretary General Amre Moussa October, Ambassador Crocker highlighted some of the progress in Iraq. The Iraqi government has formed a special committee to reach out to the Sunnis. Thousands of Iraqi men in Baghdad, mostly Sunni, have affirmed they want nothing to do with the militias, or Al Qaida. We are working with the Iraqi government as they form into neighborhood watch groups, an idea that began in Anbar and has moved forward with very good results, including in mixed neighborhoods. Some of these young men would become part of the Iraqi security forces. We are working with the Iraqi government on finding jobs for others. In West Baghdad, Sunni and Shia leaders signed a reconciliation agreement brokered by the Iraqi government. With the level of fear decreasing, progress of reconciliation should continue, albeit slowly.

¶3. (C) Moussa worried that Iran (aside from the U.S.) was the dominant player in Iraq right now. He asked about the U.S.-Iranian dialogue. Ambassador Crocker said that communication with the Iranian regime focuses on security in Iraq. Frankly, there is little indication the Iranians want to play a positive role. He assessed that the Iranians are fearful of the Iraqi situation, based on their own scarred history with Iraq. As a result, the Iranians are overreaching and destabilizing Iraq. There is a danger that Iran may seek the Hizballah-ization of Iraq; Moussa agreed that this is a serious concern. Ambassador Crocker told Moussa that we need Arab influence, in a positive way, to support Iraq. This is critical. Iraqi PM Maliki needs Arab support. Moussa said that Maliki had improved and that his confidence in him was growing. Maliki is an Iraqi first who

has been able to put aside his Shia identity as prime minister. He asked if Maliki was angry with at the USG because of our Sunni outreach efforts; Ambassador Crocker said no, and that in fact Maliki himself was going forward with similar outreach.

14. (C) Moussa told Ambassador Crocker that security, reconciliation and the Arab identity of Iraq are critical. We are all in the same boat, he said repeatedly. Now is not the time for blame or recrimination. He agreed that the security situation had improved, but was not convinced there was a coherent strategy for national reconciliation. A main concern for Arabs was that Iranian influence had co-opted Iraqi Shia and Arab states and leadership were powerless to stop it. The U.S. was pressuring Arab leadership to put on a smiley face toward this, he contended. He argued that Arab states must be able to reach out to Iraqi Shia as Arabs.

15. (C) Ambassador Crocker said that Arab states can, and should, do more. If the Arab states want a bigger role, the U.S. will be supportive. Greater involvement would assure the Sunnis, but also allow Iraqi Shia the chance to assert their Arab identity. To that end, Arab states should increase their level of representation in Baghdad, and also receive Iraqi leadership in their own capitals. Moussa agreed and said the League plans to send a high level envoy as permanent representative to Iraq. He noted that the Saudis were planning to reopen their embassy, and that Egypt was planning to return its ambassador. (Note: Egyptian Foreign Minister Aboul Gheit equivocated on this point in a subsequent meeting see septel. End note.)

16. (C) Moussa said that Arab diplomatic activity alone would not be enough. We must work together to save the situation in Iraq. America has important, sensitive interests, but Arabs have interests too - the Iraqi present and future, and the Arab identity of Iraq. If you fail, we fail, and Iran wins. The Arab League had made efforts to assist Iraqi national reconciliation, but these had failed because they had been viewed as Arab solutions. The League would try again; democracy is democracy and cannot be based on religious affiliation. He argued that the Iraqi political system and constitution should not be based on ethnic affiliation. For example, requiring the prime minister to be Shia, or any other ethnicity, would create a potential for resentment. He complained that the recent Senate non-binding resolution on Iraq, which he interpreted as a call for trifurcation of Iraq along ethnic lines, was ill-conceived and has had a very negative impact on public opinion toward the U.S. in the region. Ambassador Crocker said that he believed that Congress was not going to act precipitously or recklessly, and that while the President would go forward with a drawdown of troops, our level of troops ultimately would be contingent on conditions in Iraq.

17. (U) Ambassador Crocker has cleared this message.  
RICCIARDONE